

The stream of supplies going forward to an army may be likened to the water delivered against a fire by an old-fashioned bucket brigade. For every pailful thrown on the fire there must be many that have been taken from the source of supply and are on the way. As the distance from the source increases this supply in transit constantly grows. When an army is 3,000 or 4,000 miles from its sources of supply the amounts of supplies in reserve and in transit are enormous as compared with the quantities actually consumed each month.

The rule generally followed for clothing was that there should be for each man at the front a three months' reserve in France, another two or three months' reserve in the United States, and a third three months' supply continuously in transit. Wool coats, for example, last about three months in active service. Hence for every coat on a man's back at the front there had to be a coat in reserve in France, a coat in transit, and a coat in reserve in the United States. For every man at the front four coats were needed, and needed as soon as he went overseas. Two million men overseas required something like 8,000,000 coats, and required them immediately.

The same thing was true for other supplies and munitions. The need for reserves and the time required for transportation called for the supply of enormous quantities and called for it at once. The immediate needs for each man sent forward were in fact far in excess of the later requirements. For munitions difficult to manufacture, such as artillery and ammunition, the problem presented by this necessity for reserves and large amounts in transit, in addition to the actual equipment of troops, was almost insuperable. The initial need is so great in a situation of this character that it can only be met in one of two ways; either by having the initial equipment available at the outbreak of war, or by immediately securing such an enormous productive capacity that it is larger than is required for maintaining the establishment later.

In supplying food and clothing and other articles which are matters of common commercial production, the problem was not as difficult as with ordnance; but the large needs for initial equipment did put an enormous strain upon the industries